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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 001502

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: BUENOS AIRES MAYOR TELERMAN ON CITY AND NATIONAL
POLITICS

REF: BUENOS AIRES 01240

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for Reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: In an August 1st meeting with Ambassador, Buenos Aires Mayor Jorge Telerman expressed his personal affinity for the U.S. and said he thought U.S.-Argentine relations were "like the swing of a pendulum" and would move in the other direction eventually. Telerman offered his views on city and national politics. Telerman said that a major challenge for Argentines was creating strong institutions with consistent predictable practices. He argued that his experience as mayor had prepared him well for the negotiations over the transition of power to Mayor-elect Mauricio Macri, which he said are going well and which he hoped can help set a good example for political transition elsewhere in the country. Telerman said that he thought that creating a city-run police force or transferring control of the federal police in the capital to the city government will be much more complicated than what is being portrayed in the media. It will take years. Telerman candidly shared his view of the general political panorama in Argentina, lamenting Argentina's inability to break the boom-bust cycle it has been on for decades. Telerman explained that the Civic Coalition, with whom he campaigned for mayor and which now supports center-left leader Elisa Carrio's presidential candidacy, has the potential to bring change to the political party system in Argentina, but he fears it will just end up representing more of the same. On the growing problem of shanty towns in the capital, Telerman said he believes the federal government is not doing enough to improve the conditions of the poor. This is a national, not a city, problem fueled by the attraction of jobs and services in the capital. He asked Ambassador for assistance with exploring a temporary teaching position in the U.S, so that he may be out of the spotlight immediately following the end of his mandate in December. Although Telerman did not make any direct comments about his defeat in the June mayoral elections, he seemed disappointed by his loss but determined to continue in politics. He said the fact that he received 21.7 percent of the vote demonstrated that there is a "political space" that could be filled again in the future.
END SUMMARY.

Strong Cooperation

¶2. (SBU) On August 1, Ambassador Wayne and poloff received Buenos Aires Mayor Jorge Telerman. The Ambassador thanked Telerman for the city's strong cooperation and support to the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires on security, commercial, and cultural issues. Telerman expressed his personal affinity for the U.S., where he spent several years as an Argentine diplomat and where one of his children was born. He said that although U.S.-Argentine relations are going through a difficult period, he believes that this will eventually change ("like the swing of a pendulum"), as many Argentines share his feelings of friendship toward the U.S.

Political Outlook: Buenos Aires

¶3. (SBU) Telerman did not explain his future plans, which, according to local press, include creating his own party and seeking a legislative office in 2009. But he did say that his 21.7 percent in the face of a government supported candidate and a powerful center-right candidate indicated that there is a "political space" out there to fill for an alternative political force. He said that he loves and feels very comfortable working in government and feels proud of his performance as mayor. (NOTE: Telerman has been acting-mayor of Buenos Aires since 2006, when then-Mayor Anibal Ibarra was removed from office in the fallout from the Cromagnon night club fire. END NOTE.) He said that he was forced to remain open to dialog and consensus (a unique approach to governing in Argentina, according to him) because of this circumstance.

He highlighted that the city budget process was done publicly for the first time under his leadership. Telerman said that since he did not have any legislators in the city legislature on his side, he had to negotiate the budget through a more public dialog than his predecessors.

¶4. (SBU) Telerman said that his experience as mayor had prepared him well for the negotiations over the transition of power to Mayor-elect Mauricio Macri, who will assume office on December 10 (SEE REFTTEL). He described the transition negotiations as very smooth and congratulated Macri for having run a very successful campaign. Although Macri has asked that Telerman cut public works spending and collect over-due taxes to reduce the city's debt before December, Telerman said he hopes to find an alternative solution to cutting public works funding. He said he hoped that the proposed budget cut would not be approved in the city legislature, which he thought would vote on it later this month. Telerman also said he hoped a smooth political transition in the city could set a model for others as Argentina does not have a tradition of smooth transitions between administrations.

¶5. (SBU) Telerman said that he thought that creating a city-run police force or transferring control of the federal police in the capital to the city government will be much more complicated than what is being portrayed in the media. (NOTE: The three main candidates for the June mayoral race--Mauricio Macri of PRO, Daniel Filmus of Kirchner's Victory Front (FPV), and Telerman--all promised to work for a city-run police force in their campaigns. The city currently does not have its own police force, but is policed by federal police officers. Since Macri's win on June 24, he has had a series of meetings with President Kirchner and Cabinet Chief Alberto Fernandez, in which the federal government agreed to revise the law governing the city's control of a police force, but has not agreed on details or on resources. Macri's camp is pushing for a conversion of federal police into city police and for federal funding to run the city police force. END NOTE.) Telerman said he suspects that the Kirchner administration will not transfer power over the police in the city, or if it does, it will probably be without funding to make Macri's management of a city force difficult, if not impossible. (NOTE: There is some opposition in other provinces to the idea of federal funding for a city force. Provinces receive no federal funds for provincial police and argue Buenos Aires should not either.

END NOTE.) Telerman explained that his plan for the police was much more gradual and comprehensive, with a plan to deputize 600 officers this year, 700 next year, and then gradually increase the number of officers each year. He cited the six to eight year transition in Madrid as an example to follow.

Political Outlook: Argentina

16. (SBU) Telerman candidly shared his view of the general political panorama in Argentina, lamenting Argentina's inability to break the boom-bust cycle it has been on for decades. He said that Argentines have a hard time accepting normalcy, seeking exceptional solutions to their problems and then suffering exceptional consequences of those extreme solutions. He described Argentina as a country that lives the extreme of what others experience: where other countries have international disagreements, Argentina nearly declares war on Chile and fights a war over the Malvinas; where other countries have problems with inflation, Argentina has two periods of hyperinflation; where other countries have domestic political unrest, Argentina suffered "dozens of thousands" of disappearances and murders under the dictatorship. Telerman said that he believes this pattern and the perpetual state of institutional weakness in the country are due to an inability to accept the normal development of institutions. He said that each leader--at all levels of government and society--scraps the work of his predecessor and starts over. He said he thought it was due more to naivete than to malicious intent, but nevertheless is detrimental to the strengthening of institutions over time. Telerman added that he plans to vote for a female for president (NOTE: There are currently two females running for president in October: First Lady Cristina Kirchner and center-left leader Elisa Carrio. Telerman coyly did not

disclose which of them he prefers. END NOTE.) because men have already had a chance to improve all of these things and have not. He said he hopes a woman might do a better job.

17. (SBU) Telerman explained that the Civic Coalition, with whom he campaigned for mayor and which now supports center-left leader Elisa Carrio's presidential candidacy, has the potential to bring change to the political party system in Argentina, but he fears it will just end up representing more of the same. He said that he would like to see the coalition incorporate distinct points of view and various political groups, but he sees it moving more in the direction of serving as a vehicle to attain power for a strong leader. Telerman lamented that the traditional political parties seem to have no interest in real reform and rather perpetuate the system of strong leaders and weak institutions in Argentina. He was not hopeful for significant opportunities for new political parties outside of the biggest cities, like Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, and Mendoza. He highlighted that in Buenos Aires, he and Macri obtained over 70 percent of the votes against Kirchner's more traditional political party FPV, which indicates there is room in Buenos Aires for new political entities to be successful.

18. (SBU) On the growing problem of shanty towns in the capital, Telerman said he believes the federal government is not doing enough to improve the conditions of the poor. He said that the "villas," as they are called locally, could be urbanized and converted into legitimate neighborhoods within three to four years. He said that would require resources beyond what the city can contribute, but he does not see any indications of federal development or social assistance planning that would address the mismanagement of resources meant to improve the villas. He said that while the city will continue to try to address the issues of the villas, he does not expect any real progress until the federal government starts cooperating at the same time in development and improvement efforts.

Looking to get out of Dodge

¶9. (C) Telerman asked Ambassador for assistance in establishing communications about a temporary teaching position as a visiting professor at a U.S. university. He said that he would like to be away from Buenos Aires after his mandate ends in December.

Comment

¶10. (C) Although Telerman did make any direct comments about his defeat in the June mayoral elections, he did say that it was a shame to "have suffered the consequences of rage," in an apparent allusion to the Kirchner administration's smear campaign against him in favor of the FPV candidate Daniel Filmus. Telerman's request for assistance to get away from Buenos Aires during Macri's first few months as mayor also indicates that he is disappointed and probably pretty tired after his defeat in June. He is an astute and affable politician who will probably return to Argentine politics in 2009 for a city or national legislative office. END COMMENT.
WAYNE